

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DLOS-04 SAL-01 OFA-01 EB-07 IO-11

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 INT-05 FEA-01

TRSE-00 COME-00 OES-03 /103 W

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R 090732Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1928

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1646

CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, TS, LY

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONFLICT OVER DIVISION OF CONTINENTAL
SHELF

REF: TUNIS 1537 DTG 041032Z MAR 76

1. ACCORDING SENIOR OFFICIAL MIN FON AFFAIRS, LIBYAN-
TUNISIAN DISCUSSIONS OF CONTINENTAL SHELF WERE DIFFICULT
AND DID NOT RESOLVE BASIC ISSUES. LIBYANS STUCK BY
BASIC PRINCIPLE THAT RESOURCES OF LIBYAN AND TUNISIAN
CONTINENTAL SHELF SHOULD BE DEVELOPED JOINTLY AND TURNED
DOWN TUNISIAN REQUESTS TO ARRIVE AT DEMARCATION LINE
EITHER ON BASIS DIRECT NEGOTIATION OR THROUGH INTERNA-
TIONAL ARBITRATION. PROCES VERBAL STATING DIVERGENT
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POSITIONS OF BOTH SIDES WAS SIGNED MORNING MAR 6 AND

LIBYAN DELEGATION RETURNED TO TRIPOLI.

2. WHEN ASKED WHETHER LIBYANS HAD EXPRESSED POSITION ON GOT EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES ON PERMIT ADJOINING LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF NOTED PARA 2 REFTEL OR OTHER AREAS OF CONTINENTAL SHELF CLAIMED BY TUNISIA, MOFA OFFICIAL NOTED THAT LIBYANS SPECIFICALLY SAID GOL WAS AGREEABLE TO ALL TUNISIAN OFFSHORE PETROLEUM EXPLORATION PERMITS. WHILE HE HAD NOT ACTUALLY SEEN FINAL TEXT, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THIS POINT HAD BEEN INCLUDED IN PROCES VERBAL AND CONSTITUTED A DE FACTO LIBYAN APPROVAL OF EXPLORATION ACTIVITY ON TUNISIAN OFFSHORE PERMITS WHICH SHOULD SATISFY ANY FOREIGN OIL COMPANY INVOLVED IN SUCH ACTIVITY. HE NOTED THAT IT WOULD BE MOST INAPPROPRIATE FOR GOL TO GIVE OR GOT TO SEEK SPECIFIC APPROVAL OF ACTIVITY TAKING PLACE IN AREAS UNDER TUNISIAN JURISDICTION.

3. MOFA OFFICIAL ADDED THAT PRESENT MEETING OF JOINT COMMISSION OCCURRED ON SHORT NOTICE FOLLOWING CALL ON PRESIDENT QADHAFI BY TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR IN TRIPOLI ABOUT 10 DAYS AGO. WHILE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF CALL WAS TO DISCUSS DISAPPEARANCE OF TUNISIAN BUSINESSMAN RAOUF MHENNI, AMBASSADOR ALSO USED OCCASION TO REVIEW VARIOUS PENDING ISSUES IN TUNISIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS. QADHAFI REPORTEDLY TOOK INITIATIVE TO PROPOSE RECONVENING OF JOINT COMMISSION IN TUNIS ON CONTINENTAL SHELF.

4. COMMENT: REPORTED LACK OF OBJECTION BY LIBYANS TO EXPLORATION ACTIVITY ON CONTINENTAL SHELF AREA CLAIMED BY TUNISIA MAY ENCOURAGE FOREIGN DRILLING AND OTHER PETROLEUM SERVICE COMPANIES TO PROCEED. HOWEVER, CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY AS TO HOW POSSIBLE PETROLEUM DISCOVERY (PARTICULARLY ONE CLOSE TO LIBYAN AREA) IS TO BE EXPLOITED MAY VERY WELL DISCOURAGE FOREIGN OIL COMPANIES HOLDING TUNISIAN OFFSHORE PERMITS, ESPECIALLY IF THEY--LIKE MARATHON--HAVE SUBSTANTIAL INTERESTS IN LIBYA
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